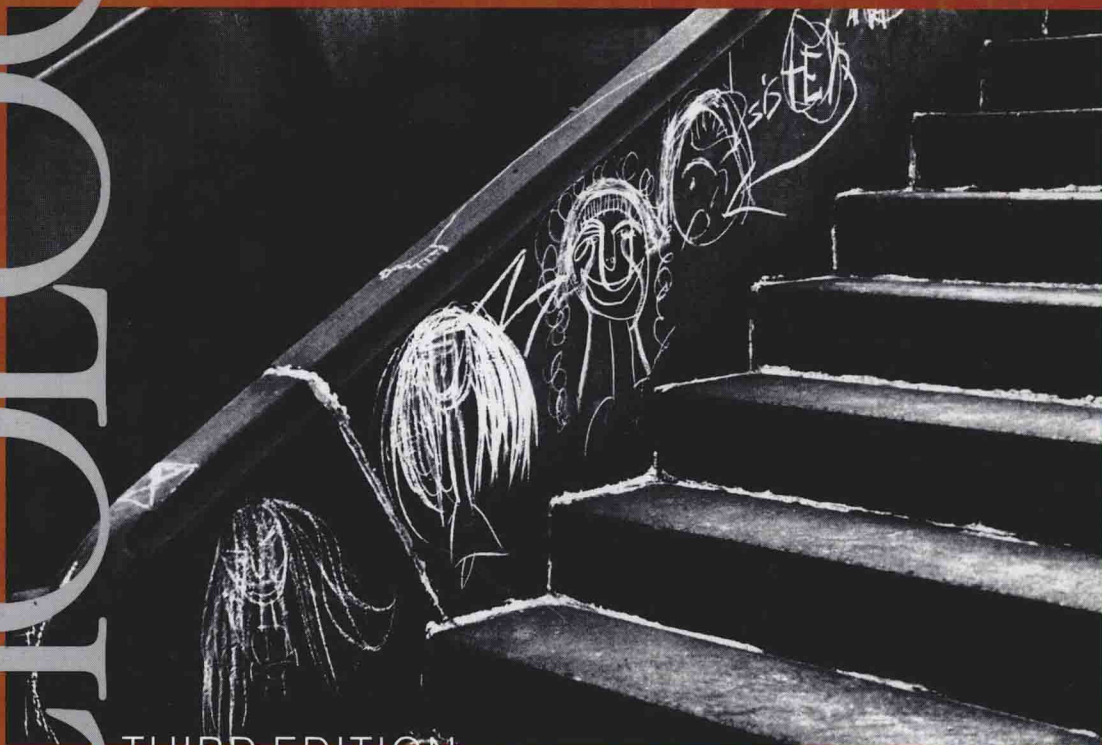


SOCIOLOGY

EXPLORING THE ARCHITECTURE
OF EVERYDAY LIFE



THIRD EDITION

DAVID M. NEWMAN

Sociology

*Exploring the Architecture
of Everyday Life*

THIRD EDITION

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Visual Essays edited by

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It was the first day of the fall semester in 1994. I had just finished making the final adjustments to the first edition of this book, which was due to be published the following January. I felt good, like I'd just accomplished something monumental. Even my two children were impressed with me (although not as impressed as the time we went to a professional hockey game and I caught a speeding puck barehanded). I walked into the first meeting of my Contemporary Society class eager to start teaching wide-eyed, first-year students a thing or two about sociology.

In my introductory comments to the class that day I mentioned that I had just finished writing this book. The panicked look in their eyes—a curious combination of awe and fear—calmed when I told them I wouldn't be using it that semester. I assured them that the process of writing an introductory text helped me immensely in preparing for the course and that I hoped to pass on to them the knowledge I had accumulated.

The next day after class one of the students—a bright, freshly scrubbed, 18-year-old man—approached me. The ensuing conversation would leave a lasting, humbling impression:

Student: Hi. Umm. Professor Newman . . . I called my parents last night to, like, tell them how my first day in college went. I think they were more nervous than I was. You know how parents can be.

Me: Yes, I sure do. I'm a parent myself, you know.

Student: Yeah, well, anyway, I was telling them about each of my classes and what all my professors are like. I told them about this class and how I thought it would be pretty cool. I told them you were writing a book. I thought that would impress them, you know, make it seem like they were getting their money's worth.

Me: Well, thanks.

Student: So, they go, "What's the book about?" [He laughed sheepishly.] I told them I didn't know, but I'd find out. So that's what I'm doing . . . finding out.

Me: Well, I'm glad you did. You see, it's an introductory sociology textbook that uses everyday experiences and phenomena as a way of understanding important sociological theories and ideas. In it I've attempted to. . . .

Student: Wait, did you say it was a *textbook*?

Me: Why, yes. You see the purpose of the book is to provide the reader with a thorough and useful introduction to the sociological perspective. I want to convey. . . .

Student: [quite embarrassed now] Oh. Professor Newman, I'm very sorry. I misunderstood you. I thought you had written a *real* book.

Real book. *Real* book. *Real* book. Those words echoed in my head like some relentless church bell. At first I tried to dismiss the comment as the utterings of a naïve kid who didn't know any better. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized what his comment reflected. The perception that textbooks aren't *real* books is pervasive and, sadly, not altogether unwarranted. These books hover on the margins of the literary world, somewhere between respectful, intellectual, trailblazing research and Harlequin romance novels. Historically they've been less than titillating: thick, heavy, expensive, and easily discarded for a measly five bucks at the end-of-semester "book buy-back."

My goal from the start has been to write a textbook that reads like a *real* book. In the first two editions I wanted to capture simultaneously the essence of my discipline and the reader's interest. From what reviewers, instructors, and students who've read and used the book have said, I think I've been fairly successful. People seem to like the relaxed tone and appreciate the consistent theme that ties all the chapters together. Many instructors have commented on how the book enables students to truly understand the unique and useful features of a sociological perspective.

Changes in the Third Edition

To my ten-year old son, revising this book for the third edition was surely a sign of my incompetence. "Why do you keep writing the *same* book over and over? My teacher makes me redo my math homework when I get too many problems wrong. Is that what's going on here? Is your publisher making you write the book over because there's too much wrong stuff in it?" I told him "no" and that I'd make him read the book—cover to cover—if he continued criticizing it. He stopped.

Despite his concerns, sociology textbooks do need to be revised regularly. No book can be of lasting value if it remains static, locked into a particular style and content. Here are some changes I've made in this third edition to enhance the features that worked so well in previous editions.

New and Improved Visual Essays

This edition includes a larger, improved visual component. Many textbooks have photos, graphs, charts, and so on. But rarely does this material go beyond simply filling up space. I wanted the visual images in this book to paint detailed, informative sociological portraits. To that end, Douglas Harper, one of the foremost visual sociologists in the world today, produced several unique, vivid, and provocative visual es-

says for this edition. Doug is a master at using photographic images to tell powerful sociological stories. His essays—focusing on such diverse social phenomena as baseball, family photo albums, the subculture of tramps, global vegetable markets, transsexualism, images of social class, domestic violence, the experiences of Iranian immigrants, and Hollywood’s depiction of the future—provide a wonderful opportunity for you to “see” many of the concepts and ideas I’ve written about in the book. As you study the visual essays, you will become a much more visually astute observer of and participant in your own social world.

New Micro-Macro Connections and Research Features

In the first and second editions I provided many in-depth features that focused either on a specific piece of sociological research or on some issue that illustrates the connection between the everyday lives of individuals and the structure of their society. These extended discussions linked social institutions to personal experiences and, in the process, provided insight into the methods sociologists use to gather information and draw conclusions about how our world works.

Many instructors and students who have used this book found these features useful tools in generating classroom discussion. So in this third edition, I’ve updated some and added others. The new features focus on many topics receiving widespread attention in the popular press, such as the toy industry’s role in gender socialization, tabloid journalism and celebrities’ rights to privacy, the American health care system, the worldwide tobacco epidemic, welfare reform, racism in professional sports, sexual harassment in the military, and the culture of Generation X.

Updated Examples and Information

As in the first two editions, each chapter is peppered with anecdotes, personal observations, and accounts of contemporary events. Many of the examples you will read are taken from today’s news headlines; others are taken from incidents in my own life. Throughout the book I’ve tried to provide the most up-to-date information possible. All these examples are meant to show you the pervasiveness and applicability of sociology in our everyday experiences in a way that, I hope, rings familiar with you. I’ve also updated all of the graphics and, in the process, changed many from statistical tables to more readable charts, making trends and relationships more obvious.

One of the greatest challenges I face as a teacher of sociology is trying to get my students to see the personal relevance of the course material, to fully appreciate the connection between the individual and society. The “everyday life” approach in this book uses these examples and personal observations as a vehicle for understanding the relationship between individuals and society. The true value of sociology lies in its unique ability to show the reciprocal connection between the most private elements of our lives—our characteristics, experiences, behaviors, and thoughts—and the cultures, groups, organizations, and social institutions to which we belong.

My purpose is to make the familiar, unfamiliar—to make you critically examine the commonplace and the ordinary in your own life. Only when you step back and examine the taken-for-granted aspects of your personal experiences can you see that there is an inherent, sometimes unrecognized organization and predictability to them. At the same time you will see that the structure of society is greater than the sum of the experiences and psychologies of the individuals in it.

Increased Global Focus

In addition this edition contains many more cross-cultural examples and discussions of globalization than did the previous editions, showing how our lives are linked to, and affected by, our increasingly global society. One of the most profound trends in the world today is the linking of heretofore disconnected societies and cultures. It is difficult, if not impossible, to provide a complete picture of sociology and social life without examining how our lives are intertwined with global events and processes.

A Study Site on the World Wide Web

A world wide web site has been added to this third edition to enhance its applicability and utility. The site can be accessed via the Pine Forge web site at www.pineforge.com. This site includes do-it-yourself reviews and tests for students, web-based activities designed to enhance learning, a chat room where students and teachers can post messages and debate matters of sociological significance, and a resource file containing additional micro-macro connections and research features, many of which appeared in the first and second editions.

New Articles in the Companion Reader

The companion volume to this book is a carefully constructed book of short articles, chapters, and excerpts from other authors. These readings are provocative and eye-opening examples of the joys and insights of sociological thinking. Many of them vividly show how sociologists gather evidence through carefully designed research. The readings examine common, everyday experiences, important social issues, or distinct historical events that illustrate the relationship between the individual and society.

Nineteen of the thirty-one articles in the companion reader are new to this edition. I have drawn from the most recent scholarship to glean some new selections that touch on such important and relevant sociological issues as the relationship between social structure and clinical depression, the media creation of the crack epidemic, cultural variation in conceptions of time, the dilemmas working parents face in balancing home and work, the strains of working in service occupations, the tough decisions single mothers on welfare must make, racism in American universities, crime fears among women, and the effects of religion on political activism.

Teaching Resources to Accompany the Book and Companion Reader

The *Teaching Resources Guide*, available from Pine Forge Press in hard copy or on a disk upon adoption of either the text or its companion reader, provides comprehensive, thorough coverage of the material in each book, including:

Learning Outcomes. An essay written by David Newman that explores the various goals motivating his writing and his teaching, along with suggestions on how to use the guide to achieve these instructional goals.

Chapter Summaries

Class Exercises and Discussion Topics. Suggestions for writing exercises, discussion topics, and student assignments to use both in and outside of class. Also provides suggestions for how to utilize the text's Your Turn activities.

Literary and Visual Resources

Test Bank. Multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. The test bank was developed to test students' understanding of the material, so instructors can encourage students to move beyond basic memorization of materials toward application and critique. The multiple-choice questions are organized as recall questions and application questions. Recall questions are based more directly on the information presented in the textbook, and application questions assess students' comprehension of the material and their ability to apply concepts, theories, and research findings.

Teaching Resource Materials: Annotated Bibliography. An annotated bibliography of resources useful in preparing for and designing classes, suggestions for how to manage teaching interactions and elicit and evaluate student performance, and techniques for handling any challenges that arise in class.

A Word About the “Architecture of Society”

I have chosen the image of architecture in the subtitle to convey one of the driving themes of this book: Society is a human construction. Society is not “out there” somewhere, waiting to be visited and examined. It exists in the minute details of our day-to-day lives. Whenever we follow its rules or break them, enter its roles or shed them, work to change things or keep them as they are, we are adding another nail, plank, or frame to the structure of our society. In short, society—like the buildings around us—couldn't exist were it not for the actions of people.

At the same time, however, this structure that we have created appears to exist independently of us. We don't usually spend much time thinking about the buildings we live, work, and play in as human constructions. We see them as finished products, not as the processes that created them. Only when something goes wrong—the pipes leak or the walls crack—do we realize that people made these structures and people are the ones who must fix them. When buildings outlive their usefulness or become

dangerous to their inhabitants, people must renovate them or, if necessary, decide to tear them down.

Likewise, society is so massive and has been around for so long that it *appears* to stand on its own, at a level above and beyond the toiling hands of individual people. But here too when things begin to go wrong—widespread discrimination, massive poverty, lack of affordable health care, escalating crime rates—people must do something about it.

So the fascinating paradox of human life is that we build society, collectively “forget” that we’ve built it, and live under its massive and influential structure. But we are not “stuck” with society as it is. Human beings are the architects of their own social reality. Throughout this book I examine the active roles individuals play in planning, maintaining, or fixing society.

A Final Thought

It is my conviction that the teaching/learning experience can and should be a personally relevant, thought-provoking, and enjoyable excursion. Reading a textbook doesn’t have to be boring or, even worse, the academic equivalent of a trip to the dentist (although I personally have nothing against dentists). I believe that part of my task as an instructor is to provide my students with a challenging but comfortable classroom atmosphere in which to learn. I have tried to do the same in this book.

Your instructor has chosen this book, not because it makes his or her job teaching your course any easier, but because he or she wants you, the student, to see how sociology helps us to understand how the small private experiences of our everyday lives are connected to this thing we call society. I hope you learn to appreciate this important message, and I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Good luck,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David M. Newman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

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A book project such as this one takes an enormous amount of time to develop. I spent thousands of hours toiling away at the computer, holed up in my isolated third-floor office. Yet as solitary as this project was, it could not have been done alone. Many people provided invaluable assistance to make this book a reality. Without their generous help and support, it wouldn't have been written, and you'd be reading some other sociologist's list of people to thank. Because I have revised rather than rewritten this book, I remain indebted to those who have helped me at some point during the writing of all three editions.

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Preface xxi

Acknowledgments xxvii

I	The Individual and Society	1
	1 Taking a New Look at a Familiar World 3	
	2 Seeing and Thinking Sociologically 19	
II	The Construction of Self and Society	47
	3 Building Reality: The Social Construction of Knowledge 49	
	4 Building Order: Culture and History 81	
	5 Building Identity: The Social Construction of Self 107	
	6 Building Image: Individual and Organizational Identities 143	
	7 Constructing Difference: Social Deviance 175	
	8 Building Social Relationships: Groups and Families 217	
III	Social Structure, Institutions, and Everyday Life	261
	9 Building the Structure of Society: Organizations and Social Institutions 263	
	10 The Architecture of Stratification: Power, Class, and Privilege 307	
	11 The Architecture of Disadvantage: Poverty and Wealth 347	
	12 The Architecture of Inequality: Race and Ethnicity 385	
	13 The Architecture of Inequality: Gender 431	
	14 The Dynamics of Population: Demographic and Global Trends 475	
	15 Architects of Change: Reconstructing Society 517	

References 548

Credits 580

Glossary/Index 582

I	The Individual and Society	1
1	Taking a New Look at a Familiar World	3
	Sociology and the Individual	6
	The Insights of Sociology	8
	The Sociological Imagination	9
	■ ÉMILE DURKHEIM: <i>A Sociological View of Suicide</i>	10
	Conclusion	15
	CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	16
	KEY TERMS	16
	YOUR TURN	16
2	Seeing and Thinking Sociologically	19
	How Individuals Structure Society	20
	Social Influence: The Impact of Other People in Our Everyday Lives	22
	■ STANLEY MILGRAM: <i>Ordinary People and Cruel Acts</i>	23
	Societal Influence: The Effect of Social Structure on Our Everyday Lives	25
	<i>Statuses and Roles</i>	25
	<i>Groups</i>	27
	<i>Organizations</i>	28
	<i>Social Institutions</i>	29
	<i>Culture</i>	31
	■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Parental Rights versus Children's Welfare</i>	32
	Three Perspectives on Social Order	35
	<i>The Structural-Functionalist Perspective</i>	35
	<i>The Conflict Perspective</i>	36
	<i>Symbolic Interactionism</i>	37
	Conclusion	37
	CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	38
	KEY TERMS	38
	YOUR TURN	39
	VISUAL ESSAY <i>The Old Ball Game</i>	41

II	The Construction of Self and Society	47
3	Building Reality: The Social Construction of Knowledge	49
	Understanding the Social Construction of Reality	50
	Laying the Foundation: The Bases of Reality	51
	<i>Culture and Language</i>	51
	<i>Definition of the Situation</i>	54
	<i>Self-Fulfilling Prophecies</i>	55
	<i>Faith and Incorrigible Propositions</i>	56
	Building the Walls: Conflict, Power, and Social Institutions	58
	<i>Moral Entrepreneurs</i>	59
	<i>The Economics of Reality</i>	60
	<i>The Politics of Reality</i>	60
	<i>The Medium Is the Message</i>	61
	■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Missing from the News</i>	63
	Appreciating the Art of Social Research	65
	<i>The Nature of Social Research</i>	65
	<i>The Empirical and Probabilistic Aspects of Research</i>	67
	<i>Theories, Variables, and Hypotheses</i>	67
	<i>The Modes of Research</i>	69
	<i>The Trustworthiness of Social Research</i>	73
	<i>Ethics in Research</i>	76
	■ LAUD HUMPHREYS: <i>The Tearoom Trade</i>	77
	Conclusion	77
	CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	78
	KEY TERMS	78
	YOUR TURN	80
4	Building Order: Culture and History	81
	Dimensions of Culture	82
	<i>Material and Nonmaterial Culture</i>	83
	<i>Subcultures</i>	85
	<i>History: The “Archives” for Everyday Living</i>	85
	Cultural Expectations and Social Order	87
	■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>The “Right” Emotions</i>	88
	<i>Culture and Institutionalized Norms</i>	90
	<i>Norms and Sanctions</i>	91
	<i>In-Groups and Ethnocentrism</i>	92

Cultural Variation and Everyday Experience	93
■ MARK ZBOROWSKI: <i>The Experience of Pain</i>	95
Conclusion	96
CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	97
KEY TERMS	97
YOUR TURN	98
VISUAL ESSAY <i>A Culture of Tramps</i>	100
5 Building Identity: The Social Construction of Self	107
Social Structure and the Construction of Human Beings	108
Socialization and Resocialization: Learning Who We Are	109
The Structural Context of Socialization	111
<i>Education</i>	111
<i>Religion</i>	112
<i>Mass Media</i>	113
<i>Social Class</i>	114
<i>Racial and Ethnic Identity</i>	115
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Multiethnic Identity and the One-Drop Rule</i>	116
The Socialization of Self	121
<i>The Acquisition of Self</i>	121
<i>The Self in Structural Context</i>	126
The Socialization of Gender	127
<i>Sex versus Gender</i>	127
<i>Social Institutions and the Acquisition of Gender Roles</i>	131
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Gender Socialization and the Toy Industry</i>	133
Conclusion	139
CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	139
KEY TERMS	139
YOUR TURN	140
VISUAL ESSAY <i>A Matter of Sexual Identity</i>	142
6 Building Image: Individual and Organizational Identities	143
Forming Impressions of Others	144
<i>Social Group Membership</i>	144
<i>Individual Attributes</i>	145
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Obesity</i>	148

<i>Verbal and Nonverbal Expression</i>	151
Managing Impressions: Actors on a Social Stage	151
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Managing Impressions in Cyberspace</i>	152
<i>The Role of Norms in Impression Management</i>	154
<i>Dramaturgy: Social Interaction as Theater</i>	155
■ PETER UBEL: <i>Elevator Talk among Doctors and Nurses</i>	156
<i>Social Influences on Impression Management</i>	157
■ ELIJAH ANDERSON: <i>The Code of the Streets</i>	159
Mismanaging Impressions: Spoiled Identities	164
<i>Embarrassment</i>	164
<i>Remedies for Spoiled Identities</i>	166
<i>Stigma</i>	168
Conclusion	171
CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	171
KEY TERMS	172
YOUR TURN	172

7 Constructing Difference: Social Deviance 175

Defining Deviance	177
<i>Absolutism</i>	179
<i>Relativism</i>	183
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Mercy Killing</i>	185
<i>The Elements of Deviance</i>	187
Explaining Why People Become Deviant	188
<i>Sociological Models</i>	188
<i>Labeling Theory</i>	189
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Turning Paparazzi into Deviants</i>	190
Power and the Social Construction of Deviance	193
<i>The Criminalization of Deviance</i>	193
<i>The Medicalization of Deviance</i>	201
■ MICRO-MACRO CONNECTION: <i>Prozac and the Pharmaceutical Personality</i>	203
Conclusion	208
CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS	208
KEY TERMS	209
YOUR TURN	209
VISUAL ESSAY <i>Graffiti and the Eye of the Beholder</i>	211